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Montana State Fund

Guardian

December 1997

Key Claims Staff On Board

Welcome to **Jack Stewart**, Claim Manager and **Doreen Black**, Early Return to Work Specialist.

Jack brings over 20 years of experience in insurance, legislative and regulatory issues, and private market claims cost control to the State Fund. He joins the State Fund from ServiceMaster in Chicago where he was the Technical Manager for Claims. As Claim Manager for the State Fund, Jack will be responsible for managing the claims staff and ensuring quality in our claims administration.

Jack is married and anxious to sell his house so his wife can join him in Helena. His hobbies include astronomy, fishing, and the internet. Jack adds, "I'm happy to be here and look forward to meeting and working with everyone. My door is almost always open, so please stop by and say hi anytime."

Doreen Black joins the State Fund from the Nevada State Fund. She brings claims adjusting, supervisory, and management experience to her new position as the Early Return to Work Specialist.

As the Early Return to Work Specialist, Doreen will coordinate the programs needed to cope with changing business environments, including establishing a direction and strategy for our vocational rehab and early return to work programs. She will coordinate these services with large accounts and state agencies, as well as provide presentations and workshops to policyholders on early return to work.

Doreen's role as Early Return to Work Specialist will help ensure the State Fund contains costs, provides effective claims management, and remains a competitive market leader.

We're happy to have these talented individuals as part of our Claims team!

Governor Racicot Visits the State Fund

"The challenges for employees here were monumental.

But only through an extraordinary team of people focusing, enduring, and continuing to give a diligent effort every day could we have expected, in such a short time, to be where we are today.

I genuinely hope you feel a tremendous sense of pride.

I want to recognize Sandy Adams again for her contributions.

...Montanans all across the state have tremendous confidence in you."

Published monthly by and for the employees of the Montana State Fund.

President's Message

As we reflect on the year and the accomplishments we have made, it is an awesome thought to recognize all the dedication and sharing of our employees. 1997 was truly a year characterized by the activities that surround putting plans into action—we launched BIS, established an agency partnership with 14 select agencies, and redesigned our Underwriting Department to provide underwriting services and incorporate Loss Control and Premium Audit. These are only a few of the important achievements which have begun to show tremendous promise for our future.

As a vibrant, dynamic insurance provider, the State Fund will always be in a process of evolution and change. Your continued commitment is so vital to our organization, and without your dedication, we could not build and maintain what the State Fund is—an industry leader.

To all State Fund employees, I say thank you. It is because of you we continue to move forward into a new year.

I wish the very best to you and your families during this special season and hope each day is filled with joy and peacefulness. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Employee of the Month

"Barb's the Best!" That's how **Barb Sauter's** co-workers sum up working with her.

Barb is currently the Systems Operations Specialist. She has been in her position for 20 plus years and has a wealth of knowledge of the whole MIS system and department. As the security officer, Barb is constantly updating security for the mainframe, LAN, BIS, WMS, and Zip. "Barb takes the time to help everyone, gives advice, and lots of smiles," said one co-worker.

This month, Barb spent a considerable amount of time helping with the PAALS backfile conversion. A co-worker reported, "We were really in crunch mode trying to get everything set up and she spent long hours setting up the security profiles. Plus, she takes the time needed to get our 'emergencies' taken care of."

Congratulations, Barb. Thanks for your great customer service skills and long term commitment to State Fund!

Kudos Kolumn

Kudos for Customer Service

Kim at RC Reed Trucking called in for help with her payroll report and said she really wished the IRS would be as helpful as we are. She commented that she can always get through, and we're always helpful.

Kudos to Jeff Hilger

Jeff had an excellent month of scanning in November. With vacations and holidays he really came through and filled in the gaps. —Dwight Bernard

Kudos to Mona Tangen

A business owner in Missoula called in with questions on his policy and said Mona was courteous, well-informed, and helpful. He was impressed with the service Mona provided.

Kudos for Communication

"I asked Judy and Mona to call me when they received an unusual amount of calls from claimants who did not receive their checks. Mona informed me in early December that she was receiving these calls. That allowed us to get the problem sorted out right away. Great communication Mona!" —Debby Flansaas

Correction

Nance Hughes was incorrectly identified as the author of the article, "Early Reporting Benefits Everyone" that ran in the November Guardian. Karen Wegner was the author of this article. Great job on an informative article Karen!

Dear Guardian

By Lynn Mogstad

Dear Guardian,

Every time I call the State Fund I feel so comfortable and well taken care of! Can you tell me how the State Fund does this, and what can I tell my employees so they can give the same level of customer service to our employees?

—Pleased Policyholder in Plentywood

Dear Pleased,

Phone etiquette and courtesy is very important to our organization and a number one priority to our employees. Here are a few tips to keep in mind in order to provide this high level of customer service:

- ☎ Answer the phone promptly, on the first ring is preferable.
- ☎ Identify yourself and your department when you answer, and offer a pleasant greeting to start the call off right.
- ☎ Be aware of your tone of voice. A pleasant , upbeat voice does wonders to begin the call. Continuing the call in a professional manner is equally important.
- ☎ Be aware of the volume of your phone. A conversation that is too loud or too soft is distracting. Also, coughing, sneezing, clearing your throat, or even breathing too loud is not good etiquette!
- ☎ Be a good listener. Listen closely and you won't miss something important. That means less repetition and less need for call backs.
- ☎ Use the callers name. This helps personalize the call.
- ☎ Use common courtesy words like please and thank you. Polite conversations are not a lost art at the State Fund!
- ☎ Treat every call as the most important call. Because it is!

Dear Guardian,

What tips can you give me that I can tell other organizations on phone customer service. Whenever I call on my claim, I am treated with such respect and courtesy! Why can't everyone treat me that way?

—Courteous Claimant in Cascade

Dear Courteous,

At the State Fund, we make sure every injured worker is aware that we are here to help and phone courtesy is a #1 priority. Here are some ways to remember that!

- ☎ Use language everyone understands. Slang, buzzwords, and technical jargon confuses people and leads to repetition and call backs.
- ☎ Always follow through when you tell someone you will call them back. If someone leaves a message, respond in a timely manner.
- ☎ When transferring a call, introduce the caller politely. Everyone is more relaxed when they know who's on the line.
- ☎ Never criticize or speak negatively of another co-worker or department. This jeopardizes your integrity as well as the integrity of the entire organization.
- ☎ Internal customers are as important as external customers. Use good phone manners on every call.

We all share the same goal: to be Montana's insurance carrier of choice and industry leader in service. Treat every caller with respect, help one another, and we will achieve our goal!

Training Calendar

New Year - Great Programs

Effective Disciplinary Action: Jan. 8 & 9; 10am - 3pm; Metcalf Bldg.

Getting to Know MIS: Jan. 14; 9am - 10am; Conference Rm 201

Conducting Performance Appraisal Meetings: Jan. 20; 1pm -4:30pm; Metcalf Bldg.

Win/Win Communication: Jan. 20 & 21; 10am - 2pm; Metcalf Bldg.

Ergonomics: Jan.23; 10am - 11am; Conference Rm 201

Righting Your Writing: Jan. 24, Feb. 4, Feb.10; 10am - 12pm; Mitchell Bldg.

Human Resources

Personnel changes as of December 18, 1997

NewHires

Denise Cummins, Claim
Jack Stewart, Claim
Doreen Black, Claim
Karen Kueffler, Admin/Finance
Brent Small, Admin/Finance

Departures

Mohamed Elhamy, MIS

Promotions

Jeannie Davis—from Med Pay to Claim Assistant

Moved Recently?

Employees should always have their current address, phone number, etc. on file with Human Resources. Check your next paycheck to ensure all of the information is correct. If not, please notify HR with the correct information. Thanks for your help to keep HR files up to date!

State Fund Christmas Party

It's safe to say that those who participated had a great time! Thanks to the Special Activities Committee for planning and hosting such a fun event.

Bridget Scevers, Kelly Stanley, and Lauree Kramer. A.K.A. Triple Trouble.

Dwan Ford and Linda Goan.

Employees dance to "YMCA."

Connie Brooks and Stacy Ripple admire the Christmas plate they received in the gift exchange.

Carl Swanson, Marlene Catulli, Jim McCluskey, and Kelly Stanley enjoy conversation.

Editor: Aidan Myhre
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Employee Reporters:
Kathy Rowsey Jean Ketchel
Charlie Adams Lee McBride
Jay Phillips

Please call 444-6502 with comments or suggested articles.

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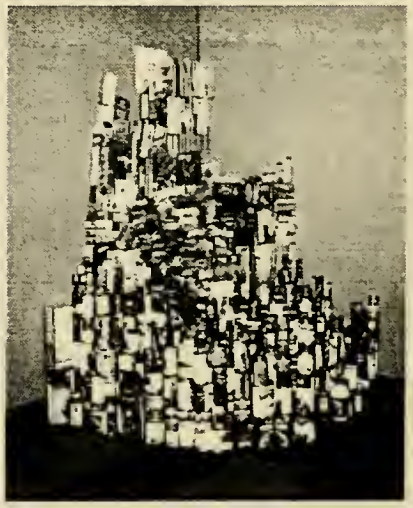
Thanks for Making Christmas Merry for Others!

Thanks to everyone who helped make Christmas a little bit brighter for people in the Helena area. The Food Share food drive brought in 1,038 items for this valuable resource in our community. Food Share will supply the holiday meals for approximately 600 needy families this season.

The Salvation Army Angel Tree program was also a success. 140 presents were donated by State Fund employees. Thanks for helping Helena area children enjoy a merry Christmas!



Thanks to casual days and the Christmas spirit, a mountain of food was brought in for Food Share.

Happy Holidays!

Governor Racicot visits State Fund
December 17, 1997

"It is definitely a different perspective to occupy down here."

There are many employees here who are very close to the issues and understand and remember the number of challenges facing the State Fund. Let me trace my own memory back without depreciating the memories of any of those who have been associated with the Fund for a long time. I can remember in 1992, unexpectedly becoming involved in a political gubernatorial race and began to learn, rather profoundly of the challenges facing the State Fund and workers' compensation. I couldn't help notice the problems were substantial, but as Governor, I had to learn and be properly informed. It was scary. Having the responsibility, after being elected Governor to be a good partner to all of you, trying to work with the Legislature, which can be challenging on occasion, and try to find a course of conduct suitable for all those involved. We had a $500 million liability or greater and we were in a deficit spending mode. Many people said the problem was even greater.

The challenges for employees here were monumental. Those who endured obviously deserve our thanks because the conditions I know were very difficult during that period of time. Where we are today, I tell you plainly the gratitude and appreciation that should be expressed to each employee by every Montana citizen, is absolutely extraordinary.

You have accomplished something that is historic in its proportion and I hope it never has to be repeated again. But only through an extraordinary team of people focusing, enduring, and continuing to give a diligent effort every day could we have expected, in such a short time, to be where we are today. I tell you from my heart, as a citizen of Montana, how greatful I am. I can tell you there is no issue that I have talked about more than workers' compensation and the State Fund. I have 300 times or more talked about all of you and the exceptional things you have done. I genuinely hope you feel a tremendous sense of pride. It would not have happened with one individual, or one board member. It only happened from thoughtful, diligent people working together. And your success has been used as a model of how we can improve other aspects of Montana.

We are ruggedly independent people. We talk to each other and we listen to each other. We speak candidly of our thoughts and that is what makes us Montanans. We are awfully proud of each and every one of you. We brag about you continuously and are very grateful for all you have done.

I know that you may suspect when we talk about pay for performance, that it is not a usual notion in state government and therefore it is not acceptable. My experience is to the contrary. It is a very acceptable notion. I wish we could convert that some mentality to the rest of state government. We are working at building it into our massive system in state government. I hope you recognize that you are a model as well for that particular transition to occur in our time.

I also want to compliment the management team of the State Fund. We don't always agree with each other everyday about everything. We wouldn't be Montanans if we did. I do think you have an exceptionally fine stable of managers who work very diligently to represent the besr interests of all of you and I think they work exceptionally well as a team to bring about the leadership necessary to point us in the right direction. And, I want to acknowledge them. In addition to acknowledging all of you in my heart as employees of the year, I want to recognize Sandy Adams again for her contributions. We recognized her at the state employee gathering. You picked her out and I want to acknowledge her again.

I hope you all have a very blessed and peaceful happy holiday season. I hope you rest comfortable in the notion that Montana, from one end of the state to another, because you have brought about so many new partnerships with private entities, you have brought about so many new innovations to provide workers' compensation insurance, you have brought about competition and continued to maintain it in such a way that it is constructive, that Montanans all across the state have tremendous confidence in you. I don't know that I can give you a higher compliment than that. To know that they now presume your competence, they don't question it first, they presume you know exactly what you are doing, and my experience has been that you do in fact know exactly what you are doing.

I thank you and wish you God's blessing. Happy holidays.